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RECENT THEOLOGICAL LITERATURE.

STUDIES IN COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY. Six Lectures delivered by
REV. GEO. H. TREVER, PH.D., D.D., Milwaukee, before
students of Lawrence University, Appleton, Wis. Cincinnati: Curts & Jennings; New York: Eaton & Mains, 1897.
Pp. vi + 482. \$1.20.

THESE lectures are full of bits of graphic and pictorial writing, admirably suited to a popular audience. Generally, too, they treat of other religions in a sympathetic way, and therefore, though the author makes no pretense of having studied them at first hand, he may interpret the religious life of the past to thousands of readers better than many an expert would. He has the art of putting things effectively, due probably to his pulpit and platform experience, but, just as we all have "the defects of our qualities," so his advantage is balanced by a corresponding disadvantage. Rhetorical flourishes, pardonable in lecturing, are out of place in a volume entitled *Studies in Comparative Theology*. Girding at people who "believe that the Divine Father would leave his children to grope like moles at random in the darkness, and then eternally damn them because they could see no more," he very properly adds that "To none of his creatures is God such a Moloch as to curse them because of a chronology or a geography with which they had nothing whatever to do;" but, if he is acquainted with people who entertain such a belief, it is uncourteous, to say the least, to inform them that such teaching "would be the most horrible Calvinism, an atrocious libel, indeed, upon their father God" (p. 373). In like manner, after giving a crude view of eclecticism, he adds: "This is about what some people mean when they prate about the religion of the future, the absolute religion, the elements of a universal religion, etc." Surely, we may speak of the absolute as distinguished from the relative, the elements or essence as compared with changing forms, the religion of the past or the future instead of the present, without "prating." It ought not to be necessary to remind writers of today that the old style of controversy, *de rigueur* during the Reformation period and subsequently, when it was believed that opponents should be well slated with vigorous expletives, if they could not be

got at with cord and rack, is quite out of date, and that they are expected to treat fellow-students with perfect courtesy. The old was not only bad style, but it implied an external and unhistorical way of looking at things.

Dr. Trever's volume is still more disfigured by his animus against a class of men whom he denominates "lynx-eyed critics," "the sage critics," or, generally, "the critics." Half or, in some circles, quarter of a century ago, critics were regarded as bad or, at any rate, dangerous people, and criticism was popularly opposed to orthodoxy. Critics were considered to be mere fault-finders, guided by no principle or rule save a concealed and inveterate opposition to "orthodox" Christianity; while use of the expression "higher criticism" indicated only superabundant conceit on their part, and, therefore, furnished occasion for gibes at their expense which any audience could understand. But "the business of criticism is to know the best that is known and thought in the world, and, by making this known, to create a current of true and fresh ideas." The acknowledged function of criticism is interpretation, and when one critic interprets a work of art, a writing, or a historic epoch inaccurately, it is the duty of other critics to show him—by reference to accepted canons—that he is in error and to put him on the right track. It is to be assumed, surely, that he has not erred wilfully, and, therefore, that he is more worthy of praise than the idle and stupid who accept every traditional view without question. Nowhere has the critical movement given us such valuable results as in history, and Delitzsch declared, therefore, that the spirit of historical investigation was the *charisma* of our age. Just because Christianity is emphatically a historical as well as an ideal religion, it welcomes the new science of history which has given us new methods. In applying these methods to the early period of the life of all nations, we may discover that legends or myths, once accepted literally, cover events, thoughts, and periods grander than the story; but in giving a new interpretation we do not destroy but fulfil. Thus Dorus and Æolus are no longer single men, but the nations of the Dorians and Æolians, and Shem and Ham stand for the populations of southwestern Asia and the north of Africa. Abraham is a representative man and his wanderings those of a large tribe; and we are thus able to understand how he was able to pursue the kings of the East with 318 warriors, born in his household, and by the aid of confederate tribes recover Lot. Jacob and Esau represent great international struggles between the Hebrew and Arabian tribes. Dr. Trever thinks

that this process is to resolve a great hero into "some ghost or other without any genuine historical reality in it. Thus," he says, "in the hands of the critics have fared Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Samson and Gautama, Homer, even Shakespeare has had his narrow escape." There is no need for alarm, even though some of the names recorded in legendary periods may be concrete summaries or eponyms of a movement. Alarm does justice neither to the constructive side of historical criticism nor to the fact that the religious value of the old story remains unimpaired.

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LAO-TZE'S "TAO-TEH-KING": Chinese-English, with Introduction, Transliteration, and Notes. By DR. PAUL CARUS. Chicago: Open Court Publ. Co., 1898. Pp. iv + 345. \$3.

THE make-up of this volume is peculiar. The contents are distributed as follows: Forty-eight pages of introduction, forty-one of Chinese text, forty-four of translation, 136 of "transliteration" (a word-for-word glossary), forty-seven of notes and comment, and twenty of index. We are led to ask what the purpose of the book is. Is it meant as an introduction to the study of the Chinese language? Then we cannot commend the choice for such a purpose of one of the most obscure pieces of Chinese literature extant. Is it a contribution to the study of comparative religion? Then it savors of pedantry to occupy over one-half the volume with matter that not one in a thousand students of comparative religion knows or cares anything about. Had the introduction, translation, notes, and index alone been furnished, thus permitting the issue of the essence of the book for one dollar, we should have had all that is really useful and a contribution for which we should have been profoundly thankful. As it is, he who is interested to learn through this issue about the philosophy of Lao Tze must purchase two dollars' worth of useless matter to get a dollar's worth of what he wants.

Lao Tze was a typical Chinaman, for whom the golden age lay in the past. He wrote but one book, about half as large as the second gospel, and it is this that is the basis of the work before us. To him it seemed that the ills of his time were due to a departure from the methods of that past. The ideal of a people, according to him, was to